

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A *Lactobacillus fermentum* strain (LB-f strain), deposited at the CNCM (Paris, France) on March 27, 2003, under registration number I-2998.

2. (Currently amended) The LB-f strain according to claim 1, having at least the following phenotypic characters:

- regular, non sporing, Gram-positive rod;
- heterofermenting;
- catalase negative; and
- L (+)-lactic acid-producing.

3. (Currently amended) The LB-f strain according to claim 1 ~~or~~ 2, having a 16S rDNA sequence comprising a nucleotide sequence selected from:

- SEQ ID No. 1;
- its complementary sequence ; and
- sequences identical at least at 98.1% to SEQ ID No. 1 or to its complementary sequence.

4. (Original) The LB-f strain according to claim 3, wherein said sequences are identical at least at 98.5%, and preferably at least at 99% to SEQ ID No. 1 or to its complementary sequence.

5. (Original) The LB-f strain according to claim 4, wherein said sequences are identical at least at 99.5%, and preferably at least at 99.8% to SEQ ID No. 1 or to its complementary sequence.

6. (Currently amended) A method for cultivating a *Lactobacillus fermentum* strain (LB-f strain) according to any of claims 1 ~~to~~ 5, comprising at least:

- a) providing a culture medium containing at least lactose and yeast extract;
- b) cultivating said LB-f strain in said culture medium under fermenting conditions; and
- c) recovering the thus obtained culture of the LB-f strain.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 6, wherein said culture medium contains lactose at a concentration range of about 50 to about 100 g/l.

8. (Currently amended) The method according to claim ~~6~~⁷, wherein said culture medium contains yeast extract at a concentration range of about 5 to about 20 g/l.

9. (Currently amended)) The method according to ~~any~~^{any} of claims ~~6 to 8~~^{6 to 8}, wherein said fermenting conditions in step b) are pH-regulated, said pH ranging between about 4.5 and 5.5.

10. (Currently amended) The method according to ~~any~~^{any} of claims ~~6 to 9~~^{6 to 9}, further comprising separating the biomass from the culture supernatant (LB-f-SCS) by centrifugating said culture of LB-f strain recovered in step c).

11. (Original) The method according to claim 10, further comprising recovering said biomass and/or said LB-f-SCS.

12. (Original) A *Lactobacillus fermentum* culture supernatant (LB-f-SCS) obtainable by a method according to claim 11.

13-23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a *Lactobacillus fermentum* strain (LB-f strain) according to ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

25. (Original) The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 24, wherein said LB-f strain is present in an amount from about 10^9 to about 10^{12} bacteria/g, preferably from about 10^9 to about 10^{11} bacteria/g, and more preferably from about 10^9 to about 10^{10} bacteria/g.

26. (Original) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a *Lactobacillus fermentum* culture supernatant (LB-f-SCS) according to claim 12, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

27. (Original) The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 26, wherein said LB-f-SCS is present in an amount of at least about 100 mg per gram of composition.

28. (Currently amended) The pharmaceutical composition according to ~~any of claims 24 to 27~~, wherein said composition is ingestible.

29. (Original) The pharmaceutical composition according to claim 28, wherein said composition is in a form selected from tablets, liquid bacterial suspensions, dried oral supplements, wet oral supplements, dry tube feeding, wet tube feeding.

30. (Currently amended) A dietary composition comprising a *Lactobacillus fermentum* strain (LB-f strain) according to ~~any of claims 1 to 5~~, and a food carrier.

31. (Original) The dietary composition according to claim 30, wherein said LB-f strain is present in an amount from about 10^5 to about 10^9 bacteria/g, preferably from about 10^6 to about 10^8 bacteria/g, and more preferably from about 10^6 to about 10^7 bacteria/g.

32. (Original) A dietary composition comprising a *Lactobacillus fermentum* culture supernatant (LB-f-SCS) according to claim 12, and a food carrier.

33. (Original) The dietary composition according to claim 32, wherein said LB-f-SCS is present in an amount of less than about 100 mg per gram of composition.

34. (Currently amended) The dietary composition according to ~~any of claims 30 to 33~~, wherein said dietary composition is ingestible.

35. (Original) The dietary composition according to claim 34, wherein said composition is selected from milk, yogurt, curd, cheese, fermented milks, fermented milk-based products, ice-creams, fermented cereal-based product, milk-based powders, infant formulae.

36. (Currently amended) A method for treating or preventing gastrointestinal disorders in a mammal, especially a human, in need of such treatment, said method comprising:

administering to said mammal a pharmaceutically effective amount of a medicine selected from the group of:

- a *Lactobacillus fermentum* strain (LB-f strain) according to ~~any of claims 1 to 5; or~~

- a *Lactobacillus fermentum* culture supernatant (LB-f-SCS) according to claim 12; ~~or~~ and
- a pharmaceutical composition according to ~~any of claims 24 to 29.~~

37. (Original) The method according to claim 36, wherein said gastrointestinal disorders are selected from ulcers and infections due to *Helicobacter pylori*, intestinal inflammatory diseases, such as ulcerous colitis, Crohn's disease and pouchitis, irritable bowel syndrome, steatohepatitis, hepatic steatosis, and infectious diarrhoea.

38. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 36 ~~or 37~~, wherein said medicine is administered orally.

39. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 38, wherein said medicine is in a form selected from tablets, liquid bacterial suspensions, dried oral supplements, wet oral supplements, dry tube feeding, wet tube feeding.